(b) if so, whether Government has evolved any comprehensive plan to increase the production of cashew in the country and the details thereof;

(c) whether there is a proposal for setting up of a Cashew Board headquartered at Kollam in Kerala; and

(d) if so, the details thereof alongwith the details of steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) No Sir. On the contrary, the production of raw cashew nuts in India during the last five years as estimated by the Directorate of Cashewnut and Cocoa Development, have increased from 5.06 lakh MTs in 2002-03 to 6.20 lakh MTs in 2006-07.

(c) and (d) The Government had commissioned a study by the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) to look into the feasibility of establishing a Cashew Board. The IIFT has given its interim report on the subject. This report is under examination by the Government.

Crisis in traditional export oriented industries due to rupee appreciation

636. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that export oriented traditional industries particularly cashew are facing serious crisis due to continued rupee appreciation;

(b) if so, the details of the sectors affected by this phenomenon;

(c) whether Government has taken steps to protect the interest of such industries; and

(d) if so, the details of the measures taken by the Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Some of the traditional sectors which have shown negative export growth for the period ending December, 2007 as compared to the same period last year are tea (-9.4%), cashew (-9.9%), foods and vegetables (-32.3%), Marine products (-50-1%), leather and leather manufacturing (-19-6%), carpet (-37.5%), handicrafts excluding hand-made carpets (-75.5%).

(c) and (d) With a view to provide relief to the exporters to check the adverse effect of rupee appreciation, Government has taken many steps which *inter-alia* include accelerated reimbursement of certain dues to exporters, reduction in the rate of interest on pre-shipment and post-shipment credit, revision in drawback rates and Duty Entitlement Passbook Scheme (DEPB) rates, refund/exemption of service tax in respect of certain services involved in exports, provision of payment of interest on EEFC balances, reduction of Export Credit and Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) premia rates.

Threat to Indian cardamon due to cheap imports

637. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian cardamom is likely to face threat from cardamom of Guatemala due to cheap import;